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In-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with paragraph 5 (e) (i) of General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994, and with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme

Summary

The present report reviews the achievements and shortcomings of the United Nations advancement of women programme with respect to the following activities: (a) servicing of intergovernmental bodies and the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (b) monitoring of the Beijing Platform for Action, and of gender mainstreaming and the status of women in the Secretariat; (c) coordination; (d) outreach; and (e) gender advisory services.

Recommendations are made which aim to enhance the effectiveness of the reporting mechanism of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and efforts to promote its work; improve coordination within the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, and between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities; and enhance outreach efforts through more effective marketing and distribution of the publications of the Division for the Advancement of Women, improving the WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites, encouraging the staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women to publish in professional journals, and improving collaboration with non-governmental organizations.

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I. Introduction

1. At its thirty-seventh session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) requested that an in-depth evaluation of the advancement of women programme be undertaken in 2000.[1] The present report focuses mainly on assessing the work of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Division for the Advancement of Women (subprogramme 28.2 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001). The outline of the report is based on the activities of the subprogramme as described in section 9.2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/6/sect. 9 and Corr.1, pp. 28 to 33).

2. The standard procedures for an in-depth evaluation were followed: (a) initial consultations with the departments and offices involved; (b) collection of United Nations documents and reports, including available assessments (such as Joint Inspection Unit reports, reports of the meetings of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies); (c) structured interviews and consultations with staff members from the Office being evaluated, focal points from other United Nations programmes and entities involved in the advancement of women, government representatives and experts, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from a list provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women. Systematic reviews of the professional literature, searches of the Lexis and Nexis databases and searches of various web sites were also undertaken.

3. Member States, through a series of four world conferences and their preparatory and follow-up activities, and the effects on national legislation and case law associated with the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have made the United Nations programme on the advancement of women a centre of innovation. Civil society has shown great interest in the programme, and made it an important source of increased awareness of the issues it addresses. Among the indicators of this interest is the level of participation of NGOs in the programme's activities and the extent of world media coverage and of the use made of its Internet sites. Qualitative and quantitative information on this impact is included in the relevant parts of the present report since it provides the context within which the Secretariat activities being evaluated are conducted. It is not possible to demonstrate a causal relationship between this impact and the work of the Secretariat alone; the Secretariat does not work alone but in conjunction with Member States, other international agencies and NGOs, and it is this combined action which, in successful programmes, produces a demonstrable impact.

II. Institutional framework

4. The subprogramme on gender issues and advancement of women is implemented by the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Office of the Special Adviser, which consists of the Focal Point for Women and the Principal Social Affairs Officer on Gender Mainstreaming, is responsible for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995, and all activities related to the advancement of women. The Special Adviser is supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women, to which she provides guidance and policy advice through its Director. The Special Adviser performs her leadership role concerning gender issues and advancement of women in the United Nations system and Member States through discussions with government representatives and ambassadors, the heads of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women delegations and NGOs.

5. The Division for the Advancement of Women, in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, reports, through the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, to the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs. It includes the Gender Analysis Section, the Gender Advisory Services Unit, the Women's Rights Unit and the Coordination and Outreach Unit. The Division's major functions are advising the Special Adviser in his or her capacity as coordinator of Gender Issues, preparing reports and other documentation, providing substantive services to various intergovernmental bodies, providing substantive and Secretariat service to CEDAW and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE), support for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,[2] and advisory services to developing countries.

6. The Gender Analysis Section is responsible for the analysis from a gender perspective of substantive areas of the implementation of the Platform for Action and for related reports, studies and expert group meetings in 8 of the 12 critical areas of concern contained in paragraph 44 of the Platform for Action.[3] Analytical studies and expert group meetings have dealt with a wide range of issues such as eradication of poverty, conflict resolution, macroeconomic policies, care provision to the elderly, gender dimensions of peacekeeping operations, gender-sensitive health policies and the situation of rural women.

7. The subprogramme's 2000-2001 authorized staffing table consists of a total of 42 posts: 1 ASG; 1 D-2; 3 D-1; 5 P-5; 10 P-4/3, 5 P-2/1; and 17 in the General Service category. In September 1999, an interregional adviser (L-3), funded under section 21 of the regular budget, was assigned to the Gender Advisory Services Unit of the Division for the Advancement of Women. The Office's appropriations for 1998-1999 were $7.4 million (regular budget) and $1.7 million (extrabudgetary resources).

8. The following funds, programmes and other entities within the United Nations system provide an overview of key actors in the field of advancement of women. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is an autonomous organization working in close association with UNDP. It has a network of 11 regional programme advisers, who work closely with NGOs, Governments and the Resident Coordinator system in their regions and convene United Nations inter-agency thematic groups to develop coordinated strategies among agencies and other donors. UNIFEM was designated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as an executing agency on gender, population and development. Since 1995 UNIFEM has supported the follow-up activities to the Beijing Conference and implementation of the Beijing Declaration[4] and Platform for Action and projects in support of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UNIFEM focuses its work on three thematic areas: supporting women's economic capacities and rights; "engendering" governance and leadership; and promoting women's human rights and the elimination of violence against women.

9. The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is an autonomous body of the United Nations established in 1976. It's mandate is to serve as a vehicle to promote and undertake policy-oriented research and training programmes at the international level, to contribute to the advancement of women worldwide and to compile databases on available gender-specific information both within and outside the United Nations system. Since its inception, INSTRAW has been funded solely through voluntary contributions. In 1998-1999, several reports were issued on the financial situation of INSTRAW (see, for example, A/54/352). In paragraph 2 of its resolution 1999/54, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW, to draw up a new structure and working method for the Institute. The revitalized INSTRAW intends to use new information technologies as a means of producing, managing and disseminating gender knowledge and information on critical issues and trends affecting women and men and their roles in development (see A/54/500). An essential part of the new Institute — the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS) project — will be a virtual workshop on gender, providing three core services: research and information; networking; and capacity-building. The GAINS project will be operational upon receipt of funding, which is currently being pursued.

10. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the Economic and Social Council conclusions on the human rights of women (resolution 1998/12, sect. III), the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were "requested to continue to prepare the joint annual work plan and strengthen cooperation and coordination in human rights activities, in particular (a) by collaborating in the writing of reports for the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights; (b) through sharing information systematically on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, its sessions and documentation of the Economic and Social Council ...; and (c) through capacity-building to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2" on gender mainstreaming (see E/CN.6/1999/2, para. 53). At its fiftieth session, the Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1994/45, decided to appoint, for a three-year period, a Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

11. Each of the five regional commissions has a unit or other mechanism that serves as the focal point for gender issues within that commission. The focal points assist in the implementation of the Platform for Action through regional plans of action, providing inputs to various reports submitted to intergovernmental bodies, hosting and participating in conferences and meetings and initiating other projects to promote the advancement of women within their regions both independently and jointly. Prior to the Beijing Conference and the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing +5 (see paras. 41 and 46 below), each of the regional commissions organized regional preparatory conferences, which were well-attended and are providing input to the special session.

12. The gender in development programme of UNDP provides policy advice and supports the development of approaches and methods for improved partnerships, analysis, capacity-building and information systems on gender equality issues at headquarters and at the country level, including the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and commitments under the Convention. It supports country offices in their upstream policy dialogue with Governments in the areas of legislation, emergency response and poverty eradication. In December 1998, a mid-term review of the UNDP capacity-building support programme for gender mainstreaming identified the major constraints faced in effective gender mainstreaming and proposed four key issues to be considered during the next phase of the programme. Currently, the impact of its four-year pilot global gender programme (1996-2000) is being assessed through an evaluation.

13. UNICEF, through the support of the Gender and Programme Partnership Section of its Programme Division, has integrated gender concerns as a cross-cutting theme in its country programmes by adopting a life-cycle perspective, giving special attention to the girl child. UNFPA contributes to the advancement of women within the United Nations system, especially in its commitment to reproductive rights, gender equality and male responsibility, and to the autonomy and empowerment of women everywhere. Both UNICEF and UNFPA have supported the review and appraisal process of the Beijing Conference. Other United Nations entities committed to gender issues in their respective work include, *inter alia*, the Department of Public Information, the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the World Bank, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

14. National machineries for the advancement of women. During the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), a number of countries established or strengthened national mechanisms to plan, advocate and monitor progress in the advancement of women.[5] As of March 1999, according to the Directory of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women, 141 Member States had established national machineries specifically devoted to the advancement of women. Heads of State or Government, or government officials at the ministerial level or equivalent appointed 67 per cent of the executives of these national machineries

III. Servicing of intergovernmental bodies

A. Support to the Commission on the Status of Women

15. Since the adoption of the Platform for Action, the 12 critical areas of concern have formed the thematic basis of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. At its fortieth session, the Commission adopted a timetable in the light of the need for a focused and thematic multi-year work programme on the 12 critical areas of concern: 1996 — media, poverty; 1997 — education, economy, power and decision-making, environment; 1998 — violence against women, armed conflict, human rights of women, the girl child; 1999 — health, institutional mechanisms. The Secretariat provided reports on the thematic issues to the Commission on the Status of Women based on expert group meetings. Substantive servicing of meetings of the Commission provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women during the biennium 1998-1999 included 10 meetings at which the Commission acted as the preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly in 2000 and 80 plenary and Optional Protocol Working Group meetings of the Commission. Additionally, the Division for the Advancement of Women provides information to the Commission in response to its

resolutions regarding various issues. For example, in 1999 at the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the report on follow-up to the Beijing Conference provided information on the implementation of Commission resolution 42/2 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts (see E/CN.6/1999/2, paras. 113-118).

B. Support to the Economic and Social Council

16. Substantive servicing of the Economic and Social Council meetings during the biennium 1998-1999 included 12 meetings of the high-level segment, the operational activities segment and the general segment of Council sessions. Parliamentary documentation submitted to the Economic and Social Council included a report on advancement of women and implementation of the Platform for Action (submitted to the high-level segment) and operational activities related to gender (submitted to the operational activities segment) (E/AC.51/1998/6 (Sect. 7A), para. 7A.40).

17. In 1997 the Economic and Social Council devoted one coordination segment to integrated follow-up to all United Nations conferences and one operational segment in 1998 to the theme "advancement of women: implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development" (E/1998/54 and Corr.1). The theme of the high-level segment in 1999 was "the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women" (see E/1999/53).

C. Support to the General Assembly

18. In addition to providing parliamentary documentation on the regular work of the programme (i.e., implementation of the Platform for Action, reports on the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the status of women in the Secretariat), the Division for the Advancement of Women submits annual reports to the General Assembly on thematic areas in response to various resolutions. For the biennium 1998-1999, such reports included effective mobilization for women in development, situation of women in rural areas, traditional and customary practices affecting the health of women, and trafficking in women and girls.

D. Views of delegations

19. The Central Evaluation Unit contacted representatives on each of these intergovernmental bodies who were familiar with the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women, including current and/or former bureau members of the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women or the Preparatory Committee. Representatives were asked questions specifically regarding the documentation provided and support by staff members. Respondents commended substantive servicing of intergovernmental bodies. Note was made of the high level of expertise within the Women's Rights Unit. Representatives expressed general satisfaction with the number and usefulness of consultations and briefings and with the quality of parliamentary documentation prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women. A number of representatives described these reports as being highly analytical. Despite the high levels of support and commitment shown by staff members, delegations considered that the Division appeared severely understaffed, particularly when compared to other divisions within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

IV. Support to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Description of the programme element

20. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted in General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and entered into force in 1981, is the first international legal instrument that defines discrimination against women and sets up an agenda of national action to end such discrimination. As of the end of 1999, 165 States had ratified the Convention. Under article 17 of the Convention, the Committee, established in 1982 at the first meeting of the States parties to the Convention, is composed of 23 experts

serving in their personal capacity. Pursuant to article 18, States parties undertake to submit to the Secretary-General for consideration by the Committee, a report on the legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures which they have adopted to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and on the progress made in this respect. These reports are to be submitted within one year after the entry into force for the State concerned, every four years thereafter, and whenever the Committee requests.

21. At its March 1999 session, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted an Optional Protocol to the Convention that allows communications to be submitted on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals claiming to be victims of a violation of any of the rights under the Convention, and establishes a second procedure by which the Committee can inquire into reliable information on grave or systematic violations of the rights in the Convention by a State party. The Optional Protocol was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/4 and signed by 23 States as of 10 December 1999 (see E/CN.6/2000/PC/2 and Corr.1 and 3). In anticipation of the entering into force of the Optional Protocol, the secretariat of the Committee in the Women's Rights Unit of the Division for the Advancement of Women retained a consultant to assess the staffing requirements in processing the expected inflow of communications. The unit is also arranging for a transfer of knowledge (guidelines and procedures) from the Human Rights Committee, which has a complaint procedure and has developed related operational guidelines. In an interview with the Central Evaluation Unit, the Chairperson of CEDAW expressed satisfaction with the support provided by the CEDAW secretariat.

22. Based on a study of the number of hits on the Division for the Advancement of Women web site within a four-month period in 1999, it appears that CEDAW attracts a substantial amount of interest (see, in this connection, paras. 80-88 below).

23. Reforms. Reforms of procedures and work practices in the Committee introduced since 1995[6] include revision of the general guidelines concerning the format and content of initial and periodic reports by State parties, with respect to the elaboration of concluding comments, designating a country rapporteur who, with the assistance of the Secretariat, seeks additional information on the situation of women in the State party under review, and establishing specific time limits for various steps in the reporting process. The Special Adviser has consistently advocated the ratification of the Convention among the remaining Member States that have not yet become parties to the Convention.

24. From 1996 to 1999, despite the introduction of a second session of the Committee in 1997 and other changes, such as focusing the dialogue on periodic reports on major issues and questions and establishing time limits for submitting reports and other responses, the backlog of reports awaiting consideration by the Committee has increased from 28 to 36. The number of overdue reports has also increased from 189 to 252 (including 54 initial reports). A review of the ways and means reports of the past three years indicates that the Committee has looked into these issues but has not yet developed plans of action.

25. Relationship with non-governmental organizations. At its sixteenth session, the Committee decided to encourage greater involvement of NGOs in accordance with the practice of the other treaty bodies. At the seventeenth session of CEDAW, in July 1997, the office of the Special Adviser reported to the Committee on steps that had been taken to facilitate participation by NGOs and their contribution to the work of the Committee. Greater involvement by NGOs in the work of CEDAW has also been facilitated by initiatives such as a joint publication of 1996 of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the International Women's Rights Action Watch to serve as a manual for monitoring implementation of the Convention entitled *Assessing the Status of Women* and a 1998 UNIFEM training booklet for NGOs entitled "Bringing Equality Home: Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women".

26. In a Central Evaluation Unit survey of NGOs regarding their relationships with CEDAW, some NGOs suggested that the Division for the Advancement of Women facilitate greater participation for both local and international NGOs, provide more substantive and informative briefings on CEDAW for NGOs and improve the timeliness of submitting CEDAW reports and scheduling information on the web site to allow for better preparation. Interviews with the Division for the Advancement of Women staff indicate that the main difficulties in considering NGO reports appear to be that they are often long and submitted late, and that

there is a lack of funds for translating reports drafted in local languages.

27. Promoting the work of the Convention. It should be noted that the Commission on the Status of Women, in its resolutions 33/3 and 34/6, the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/164, *inter alia*, and the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1995/29, *inter alia*, have reiterated the request to provide for, facilitate and encourage public information activities relating to the Committee and to the Convention. Similarly, at the end of each CEDAW session, States parties are requested to disseminate widely, particularly to women's and human rights organizations, the concluding comments of the report, the Convention itself, the Committee's general recommendations and the Platform for Action. To that end, the Women's Rights Unit has sent the concluding comments to the permanent missions of the States parties and post them on the Division for the Advancement of Women web site as early as possible.

28. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized a judicial colloquium on the application of international human rights law at the domestic level, which was held at the United Nations Office at Vienna in October 1999. Participants urged the United Nations to explore the creation of an international judicial education centre to assist countries in the design, development and delivery of judicial education programmes on international human rights instruments and jurisprudence.

29. Another means by which the Division for the Advancement of Women has promoted the work of CEDAW is the series of publications entitled *The Work of CEDAW*, which consists of sets of the reports of the Committee on its sessions and of the summary records of the discussion. The purpose of this series is to publicize on a larger scale the Committee's work and to make records easily accessible to interested Governments, NGOs, research institutes, university scholars and other individuals. However, there is a 10-year backlog of reports awaiting publication — volumes III and IV, covering the years 1988 and 1989, were published in 1997 — which reduces its relevance and usefulness for scholars, researchers, lawyers and judges. The Division for the Advancement of Women is trying to reduce the backlog and has submitted for publication to the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, volumes V to VII (1990, 1991-1992 and 1993-1994). However, these are still unpublished. Delays in issuing the summary records are the major reason provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women for the existence of this backlog. However, those delays, ranging between two and three years, cannot entirely account for the backlog of *The Work of CEDAW* series.

30. In trying to assess the usefulness of this series to researchers and professionals, a search of the Lexis database was conducted with respect to references to the Convention in national case law. It was noted that whenever case law refers to the Convention, it refers to the initial General Assembly resolution, to the treaty itself or the session reports of CEDAW, but never to *The Work of CEDAW* series publications.

31. Two additional publications promoting the work of CEDAW, one by UNESCO and one by UNIFEM and UNICEF, illustrate collaborative efforts to promote the Convention by United Nations agencies. A UNESCO booklet on CEDAW entitled *Passport to Equality*, through extrabudgetary funds was translated into 10 languages and is being distributed worldwide to a variety of local groups. UNIFEM and UNICEF have jointly produced an information kit on the Convention, including information on relevant issues such as cultural and traditional practices, the rights of young women and reproductive and sexual rights.

B. Some evidence of programme impact

32. Legal and policy impact of the Convention. The UNIFEM training booklet (see para. 25 above) contains examples of how the Convention has been successfully implemented and its human rights principles integrated in constitutions, laws, policies and case laws at the national level in State parties. A search by the Central Evaluation Unit of law review journals and case law reports in the Lexis database indicated that, in many countries, domestic courts have reviewed cases involving discrimination against women which used the Convention to bolster the plaintiff's claims. For the period 1990 to 1999, the distribution of such cases found in the database is as follows: Australia, 31; Canada, 15; European Communities Court of Justice, 4; New Zealand, 10; Philippines, 1; South Africa, 5; United Kingdom, 7; United States Federal Courts, 3.

33. Impact of reporting procedures. States parties reports submitted to the Committee illustrate the impact that the CEDAW subprogramme has had at the national level in generating awareness of gender issues and encouraging a dialogue between Governments and NGOs. For example the report submitted by the Government of India for consideration at the twenty-second session of CEDAW stated: "The submission of this report has been preceded by widespread consultations throughout the country from 1993 to 1996 ... a total of over 20 meetings with a number of women's organizations were held during this period providing the Government and participants with considerable insight on a wide range of gender issues and issues relevant to Indian women. Further, one meeting was specifically held with NGOs and individual women interested in issues related to women's rights in late 1994 to elicit views on how to go about preparing India's initial report. The present report takes into account the discussions of this long and widespread consultative process. Further detailed discussions were held and written inputs received from various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India on different articles of the Convention."[7]

34. In a section on the CEDAW reporting process, the UNIFEM booklet mentioned above provides examples of the use NGOs have made of the reporting process to good effect: to hold their Governments accountable for the claims and commitments made at the sessions of the Committee, to continue dialogue with their Governments on implementing the Committee's concluding comments and as a vehicle to raise public awareness within their own countries.

35. Views in the professional literature. A number of articles on the Convention have appeared in professional journals in the fields of international law and human rights, describing the monitoring system established under the Convention, highlighting outputs that may be of use in proceedings before national courts and discussing domestic court cases in Australia, Botswana, Nepal and India in which the Convention has been invoked by the parties or by national courts. Others have focused on factors limiting the Convention's success, such as the Convention's policy on reservations, the limited authority it delegates to the Committee, its dependence on State self-reporting and lack of information regarding the work of the Convention.

36. Visibility of the programme in the media. Based on a search of the Nexis database of wire service stories about the United Nations and women with reference to CEDAW for the period 1992 to the present, it appears that the media interest in the CEDAW subprogramme is small compared to the interest accorded to the programme in general, but that since the Beijing Conference in 1995, it has attracted more attention, increasing from 18 per cent to 47 per cent of the total number of wire stories on the United Nations and women.

C. Assessments

37. A series of reports to the General Assembly of the meetings of the chairpersons of the treaty bodies (see, e.g., A/53/125 and A/53/432) and the report of the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty system (see E/CN.4/1997/74) have characterized common issues and remedies relevant to the work and practices of CEDAW.

38. In order to facilitate compliance by States with reporting obligations and reduce the number of overdue reports and the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, the chairpersons have recommended more focused reports, offering States parties advisory services and technical assistance and, in the absence of a scheduled report, consideration of the situation on the basis of information provided by the State party to other international bodies and of all other relevant information (see A/53/125, para. 28). Similarly, for overdue reports, the independent expert has recommended a more targeted advisory service and, as a last resort, examining the situation in the absence of a report (see E/CN.4/1997/74, paras. 45 and 74). The 1994 Chairpersons' recommendation that as CEDAW meeting time was inadequate, it should be significantly increased (see A/49/537, para. 49) was adopted in 1997 and implemented the following year.

39. With respect to the promotion of the work of the treaty bodies, as early as 1992, the chairpersons recommended a review of the distribution strategy of publications for specialists and the general public and an integrated strategy for conveying information from one organ to the other. The independent expert recommended that partnerships with academic and other external institutions be explored to enhance the publications (see E/CN.4/1997/74, para. 117).

40. A statement made by the Chairperson of CEDAW in December 1999 on the occasion of the opening for signature of the Optional Protocol to the Convention indicated that apart from creating new human rights mechanisms, there was a need for raising awareness among women about their human rights and about the existence of human rights systems at the international and regional levels.

V. Monitoring

A. Beijing Platform for Action

1. Background

41. The Fourth World Conference on Women was held at Beijing in September 1995, with over 47,000 people attending from Governments and NGOs. One of the outcomes was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted unanimously by 189 countries. The Platform for Action consists of concrete action to be implemented by Governments, intergovernmental bodies and civil society, categorized into 12 critical areas of concern. Since the 1985 Nairobi Conference, a review of the major obstacles to the advancement of women highlighted the need to take action in the following critical areas of concern: poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economics, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms, women's human rights, media, environment, and the girl child.[3] Detailed information on the background of the Beijing Conference and on intergovernmental mechanisms for the follow-up of the conference and approaches underpinning the Platform for Action can be found in document E/CN.6/2000/PC/2.

2. Critical areas of concern

42. As discussed in paragraph 15 above, the strategic objectives and actions in the 12 critical areas of concern have been considered by the Commission on the Status of Women since 1996. In its resolution 1996/6, the Economic and Social Council called for analytical reports to be submitted annually to the Commission on the Status of Women on the thematic issues to be addressed in connection with the implementation of selected critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action. These reports, which include specific strategies and recommendations, form the basis for the Commission on the Status of Women's formulation of its agreed conclusions. The reports on thematic issues were based on reports of expert group meetings, four of which took place at the regional commissions from 1997 to 1999. In 1996, for example, the expert group meeting on the impact of gender difference in political decision-making and conflict resolution, held at INSTRAW, Santo Domingo, was jointly organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo in cooperation with INSTRAW and UNESCO. In Addis Ababa in October 1997, the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNICEF, UNFPA and ECA jointly organized an expert group meeting on adolescent girls and their rights. In 1998, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized a meeting on mainstreaming the gender perspective into the health sector and another meeting in connection with institutional mechanisms. Based on interviews with delegations, the quality of these expert group meetings was considered high. The conclusions and recommendations of the meetings have been influential in the intergovernmental debate on these issues. On-line conferences on each of the critical areas of concern were also facilitated on the WomenWatch web site (see para. 85 below).

43. From 1996 to 1999, the Division for the Advancement of Women provided substantive support to the Commission on the Status of Women in its consideration and adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention. It facilitated the intergovernmental debate in the Open-Ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention and in the Commission on the Status of Women by preparing the following reports: a report of the Secretary-General on communications and inquiry procedures and practices under international human rights instruments and under the Charter of the United Nations (E/CN.6/1997/4) and two reports of the Secretary-General containing the views of Governments and NGOs on the elaboration of a draft Optional Protocol (E/CN.6/1996/10 and E/CN.6/1997/5). The Division for the Advancement of Women also provided substantive support during the drafting of the Optional Protocol. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues also made several statements before the Commission on the Status of Women and in press conferences on progress achieved in the negotiations.

44. An opinion survey was conducted by the Central Evaluation Unit in which delegations of Member States, Division for the Advancement of Women staff members, heads of relevant United Nations agencies and departments and NGOs were asked to give an opinion on which of the 12 critical areas of concern the United Nations has had the greatest impact. Many respondents considered that the Division for the Advancement of Women had made a substantial contribution to the area of human rights, in particular through facilitating the intergovernmental debate leading to the adoption of the Optional Protocol. With respect to violence, health and education, other relevant specialized agencies were mentioned.

3. Emerging issues

45. The Commission on the Status of Women examines emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women and makes recommendations to the Economic and Social Council accordingly. To facilitate this process, the Division for the Advancement of Women provides reports on the basis of which the Commission can identify these issues. In 1999, the secretariat submitted such a report to the Commission entitled "Gender and ageing: problems, perceptions and policies" that provided a set of recommendations related to research, the economic situation of elderly women, their well-being, empowerment and their portrayal by the media (E/CN.6/1999/3). The report followed a previous report entitled "Older women and support systems: new challenges" (E/CN.6/1998/4) and the Expert Group Meeting on Caregiving and Older Persons: Gender Dimensions, which was jointly organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Division on Social Policy and Development and held in Malta from 30 November to 2 December 1997.

4. Review and appraisal

46. The General Assembly decided in paragraph 1 of its resolution 52/231 that a high-level plenary review to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and to consider further actions and initiatives would be held as a special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. In preparation of the review and appraisal, Beijing+5, most of the agencies of the United Nations system have contributed information and analysis for reviewing progress in implementing the Platform for Action, including regional activities, national-level reporting, and the preparation of various other reports and reviews.

47. In October 1998 the Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with the five regional commissions, sent out a questionnaire in which governments were asked to report on their actions to implement the Platform for Action in each of the 12 critical areas of concern. As of mid-December 1999, 133 Member States and two Observers had responded to the questionnaire. Drawing primarily on the responses, the report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action provides an assessment of initiatives for achieving progress in this area under the following categories: (a) policy change; (b) legal change; (c) institutional change; (d) programme-level changes; (e) generation and dissemination of knowledge; and (f) resource allocation (see E/CN.6/2000/PC/2, paras. 36-93).

48. The report states that "profound changes in the status and role of women have occurred in the years since the start of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1976, some more markedly since the Fourth World Conference on Women. During that time, women have entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, actually or potentially increasing their ability to participate in economic decision-making at all levels, starting with the household. Women, individually and collectively, have been major actors in the rise of civil society throughout the world, stimulating pressure for increased awareness of the gender equality dimensions of all issues, and demanding a role in national and global decision-making processes" (ibid., para. 30). Other significant changes include the adoption of policies to increase women's equal participation in all levels of political and economic decision-making (ibid., para. 38); law reforms, including the ratification and incorporation of the Convention into national constitutions, the elimination, prevention and punishment of violence against women (ibid., paras. 43-45); the restructuring or upgrading of national machineries in many countries, in all regions, in an effort to make them stronger and more coherent (ibid., para. 56); and efforts to mainstream gender equality perspectives at the programme level (ibid., para. 66).

49. In interviews conducted by the Central Evaluation Unit with Division for the Advancement of

Women staff, and representatives of departments, programmes and NGOs, methodological issues were identified in connection with the Division's preparation of the review and appraisal report (E/CN.6/2000/PC/2). Suggestions focused primarily on the need to apply to such large research projects in the future more systematic advanced planning of the analytical framework, data collection methods and instruments, better coordination in obtaining already published information from other United Nations entities and Governments and better coordination during the analysis phase of the project. In response to a draft of the present report, the Special Adviser stated that the criticism expressed does not take fully into account such constraints as limited staff, lack of consultancy funds, difficulties with translations of government replies and national plans, among others.

B. Gender mainstreaming

50. In paragraph 38 of the Beijing Declaration, the Governments participating in the Conference state: "We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programmes."[4] In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly called upon "States, the United Nations system and all other actors to implement the Platform for Action, in particular by promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective at all levels".

51. In September 1999, the capacity of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues to monitor this area was strengthened by the addition of a Principal Social Affairs Officer for gender mainstreaming. Specific responsibilities include supporting the existing components of United Nations entities' gender mainstreaming action plans and developing new methodologies, performance indicators, techniques and tools to support practical implementation of the mainstreaming mandate. The Office of the Special Adviser and all units within the Division for the Advancement of Women share the responsibilities for gender mainstreaming in their respective areas of work.

52. The Division for the Advancement of Women has monitored the implementation of gender mainstreaming in United Nations programmes in reports to the General Assembly (e.g., A/54/264), the Economic and Social Council (e.g., E/1998/64) and the Commission on the Status of Women on initiatives taken. It has also contributed to developing a conceptual framework that could be applied to all programmes and has submitted several analytical reports on this issue in response to various requests by the Economic and Social Council. For example, the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General entitled "Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system" included the recommendations that provided the basis for the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming.[8]

53. In March 1998, the ACC adopted a statement on gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system (ACC/1998/4, para. 63) in which heads of the organizations pledged to mainstream a gender perspective in all their institutions, policies and programmes by implementing the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2. In a letter of 13 October 1997 to all senior officials in the United Nations system the Secretary-General emphasized the accountability of senior managers in gender mainstreaming. The Special Adviser established an ongoing exchange with various senior managers to facilitate their efforts on this issue (see E/1998/64, chap. II, sect. B). In its resolution 1998/43, the Economic and Social Council welcomed the efforts of the Division for the Advancement of Women and urged the Commission on the Status of Women "to continue to provide suggestions to the Council and its subsidiary bodies on further measures to implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming".

54. Gender mainstreaming activities by United Nations departments on the implementation of the Beijing Conference (see A/53/308, chap. II, sect. B) include: the theme of the thirty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development, "Gender, population and development," and a *Handbook for Producing National Statistical Reports on Women and Men*,[9] issued by the Statistics Division. Another example of gender mainstreaming is provided by the UNDP in the annual *Human Development Report*, which uses a gender-related development index in ranking countries. The Office of Human Resources Management, with the collaboration of a number of departments, has organized training to introduce gender awareness programmes in the Department of Political Affairs, ECA, ESCWA, the United Nations Office at

Vienna, and the United Nations Office in Nairobi and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

C. Status of women in the Secretariat

55. In 1997, following the appointment of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women at the level of Assistant Secretary-General, the Office of the Focal Point for Women was transferred from the Office of Human Resources Management to the Office of the Special Adviser. Its major responsibility is to monitor the status of women in the Secretariat. In this connection, the Focal Point for Women has undertaken missions to a number of regional commissions and peacekeeping missions — at the request of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations — to assess the situation of women staff at those duty stations and to brief managers and staff members on policies and strategies to achieve gender equality. She is also a member of ORIGIN, a network of senior human resources management and gender specialists within and outside the United Nations system, which shares information on best practices and new initiatives to achieve gender equality in their respective organizations. The Focal Point provides advice and counsel to women staff members seeking to resolve grievances regarding their career development prospects and conditions of service. In 1999, the Focal Point handled 171 such cases. She is assisted in her work by a network of departmental focal points for women. The terms of reference of the departmental focal points were formalized in a Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/1999/19).

56. Reports on the status of women in the Secretariat (see A/54/405) submitted to the General Assembly include statistics on gender distribution by department and grade for Professional and higher-level staff as well as a description of initiatives taken since the previous reporting period.

57. Another mechanism for monitoring the status of women is the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women, which has been in existence since 1986. Its terms of reference were revised in June 1999 (ibid.), and the Steering Committee, after a hiatus, reconvened in late 1999.

58. In 1994 the Joint Inspection Unit noted that progress had been too limited and efforts too narrowly focused to achieve overall gender equity at any time in the near future (see A/49/176). The 1999 report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat stated that although "visible progress has been made in improving the representation of women at the senior and policy-making levels, progress in improving women's representation overall in the Professional and higher categories has been slow. Although the goal of 50/50 gender distribution has been very useful in keeping up the momentum, the target will not be met by 2000" (A/54/405, para. 6). In order to accelerate the slow pace of progress (1 per cent increase in representation per year over a period of 10 years) in achieving the target of 50/50 representation and to address a perceived difficulty in the monitoring mechanism (i.e., a failure to measure both the compliance of programme managers with gender equality goals and the opportunities presented for the selection of women candidates to vacant posts), the Secretary-General reiterated in 1999 that he would request departments to prepare gender action plans and to set specific targets for the appointment and promotion of women. The establishment and implementation of the gender action plans will provide the Secretary-General with an important tool for measuring the performance of individual departments and offices, and for ensuring the accountability of individual managers. In paragraphs 11 and 12 of its resolution 54/139 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly welcomed the notion of action plans and requested the "Secretary-General to monitor closely the progress made by departments and offices in meeting the goal of gender balance". The special measures for women contained in ST/AI/1999/9 of 21 September 1999 recommended that cumulative seniority be considered for the purposes of regular and accelerated promotion of women, and that departmental action plans be established including gender distribution goals and succession plans. The current Secretary-General's bulletin on policies to achieve gender equality in the United Nations dates from 1996 and does not reflect these new measures (see ST/SGB/282).

59. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues has participated in the working groups on human resource planning, recruitment and placement and quality of work/life issues and has provided preliminary comments on the task team report on recruitment and placement to the Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Human Resources Management, and

the Deputy Secretary-General within the framework of the Subcommittee on Human Resources Management Reform.

VI. Coordination

A. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

60. After existing for 20 years on an ad hoc basis, the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) was established in 1996 as a standing committee of the ACC. Chaired by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women, IACWGE is composed of focal points on women and gender issues from United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the Secretariat. Once an issue is identified by IACWGE, a particular agency is assigned as "task manager" for inter-sessional activities. IACWGE meets at Headquarters officially once a year for three to four working days before the Commission on the Status of Women session and convenes ad hoc meetings as necessary. Currently, IACWGE is involved in a number of initiatives such as a compendium of good practices in implementing the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming, methodologies for gender impact analysis and a database on gender training materials (see ACC/1999/3, chap. III, sect. A).

61. The Central Evaluation Unit contacted participants in the latest IACWGE meeting in February 1999 to obtain their feedback on the workings of the IACWGE. Despite some suggestions for improvement, the overall assessment of IACWGE has been positive. Many members of IACWGE pointed out the need to maintain contact more regularly and informally. Many members also reacted positively to the idea of having continuing discussions on-line that had commenced in formal meetings.

62. At the last meeting of the Geneva-based Gender Working Group, in January 2000, including gender focal points from United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/United Nations, International Labour Organization, World Intellectual Property Organization, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Telecommunication Union, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), World Health Organization, Economic Commission for Europe/United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/United Nations, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/United Nations, and International Trade Centre, participants were invited to discuss a Central Evaluation Unit questionnaire on IACWGE. In a written response to Central Evaluation Unit, the Group stated that, as the only forum for all agencies/specific departments of the United Nations Secretariat/regional commissions/Bretton Woods institutions to share information and United Nations-wide concerns and interact with each other, IACWGE has served as a critical meeting and contact point, ensuring policy continuity and action on gender issues within the United Nations. Additionally, IACWGE provides important tools/information to promote gender mainstreaming within individual organizations, e.g., ACC statements on gender equality, and has played an important role as catalyst, e.g., the creation of the Geneva-based Gender Working Group. The Group considered that the weaknesses that exist relate to the fact that representation on IACWGE is only optional and not mandatory and that the short duration of the annual meetings prevent in-depth discussions. The Group was also of the opinion that the Geneva-based organizations often feel "side-lined" since they are not members of any of the task forces and, too often, are out of the "information loop". The Group also stated that the IACWGE, while a subcommittee of the ACC, does not report directly to the ACC. Therefore, the recommendations are not filtered back to the agencies through the ACC machinery.

B. System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women

63. As secretariat and coordinator in the preparation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 the Division for the Advancement of Women is responsible for preparing and circulating drafts and organizing inter-agency meetings to finalize the medium-term plan. Since the Beijing Conference, the medium-term plan has undergone a series of reviews by the Commission on the Status of Women and CPC, including a mid-term review in 1998 (see E/CN.6/1998/3). At its fourth session, IACWGE

"considered that the preparation of the present plan (1996-2001), including its mid-term review, had been a useful exercise for participating entities" (ACC/1999/3, para. 29). A new draft plan for 2002-2005 is currently being prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women taking into consideration the recommendations of the Commission on the Status for Women and CPC in the mid-term review.

C. Other coordination activities

64. The ACC has emphasized the need to approach in an integrated manner the follow-up to the United Nations global conferences by promoting a coordinated national-level follow-up around three ad hoc task forces linked to the Resident Coordinator system. To ensure that policy objectives for the advancement of women are pursued by each task force, interaction with the established ACC machinery has taken place through UNIFEM, which serves as the IACWGE focal point for liaison with the ACC task forces.

65. In addition to the above coordination mechanisms, information exchange and collaboration occur as needed through informal dialogue between staff members of various entities. For example the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW have worked together to maintain and develop the WomenWatch web site, including efforts to raise nearly $800,000 for the inter-agency project. In 1998, UNIFEM organized the United Nations inter-agency global videoconference, A World Free of Violence against Women. The regional commissions frequently exchange information and collaborate with the Division for the Advancement of Women to sponsor jointly meetings or activities. Other examples of coordination are mentioned throughout the present report.

66. The issue of coordination in the above-mentioned entities has been addressed by the Economic and Social Commission in its agreed conclusions 1997/2, in which it recommends that IACWGE, the Division for the Advancement of Women, INSTRAW and UNIFEM, in their advocacy and advisory roles, should better coordinate their support and catalytic activities and should develop joint activities and work plans in appropriate areas.[8]

67. Interviews conducted by the Central Evaluation Unit indicated that there is some risk of duplication of efforts in the separate provision of gender advisory services by the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM, UNDP and the regional commissions. Both UNDP and UNIFEM provide advisory services and training in gender mainstreaming, and two regional commissions (ECA and ESCWA) have indicated that they provide advisory services to Member States in the area of monitoring the Platform for Action. Senior officials in some of these entities suggested to the Central Evaluation Unit in interviews that efforts to coordinate should be increased, particularly at the senior level. Other suggestions included discussions on work plans and strategies, and exploration of comparative advantages of various United Nations entities.

VII. Outreach

A. Visibility of the Conference and its implications

68. As table 1 indicates, among the United Nations conferences of the 1990s, the Fourth World Conference on Women received the most media coverage, even greater than the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Table 1
Media coverage of United Nations conferences

	Number of wire service stories
Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)	3 103
World Summit for Children (1991)	457
United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992)	2 760
World Conference on Human Rights (1993)	867
International Conference on Population and Development (1994)	1 525
World Summit for Social Development (1995)	587
United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (1996)	339

69. It should also be noted that the Fourth World Conference on Women was characterized by a very large involvement of civil society, with over 30,000 participants attending a parallel forum organized by NGOs.

70. The very high media coverage and NGO involvement in the Beijing Conference shows the strong impact of the Conference in generating public interest in United Nations activities on the advancement of women is a measure of the level of potential interest that might be tapped into by outreach activities.

B. Print publications

71. The recurrent and non-recurrent publications of the Division for the Advancement of Women are distributed, free of charge, to Permanent Missions, Foreign Ministries and other official recipients on mailing lists maintained by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and on mailing lists maintained by the Division for the Advancement of Women. The publications are also deposited with 71 United Nations information centres and 342 national depository libraries in 147 countries. Division for the Advancement of Women publications are also sold by subscription and at United Nations bookstores and authorized bookshops. Total print runs of publications are determined through consultation between the Department, the Sales and Marketing Section (DPI) and Documents Control Section (DGAACS) and are approved by the Publications Board. Table 2 below includes the titles of different categories of Division for the Advancement of Women sales publications for the period 1995-1999. In addition, other Division for the Advancement of Women reports of expert group meetings were published by the ILO, on gender education and development, 1996; and educational training and lifelong learning of women, 1997; and by UNFPA, on the round table of human rights treaty bodies, 1998.

72. The publication *Women in a Changing Global Economy: World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, 1994 was requested by the General Assembly in 1992 and designed to be a key input into the Beijing Conference. Since 1995, 90 per cent of the sales stocks have been sold. This publication is also one of four Secretariat social "flagship" publications (the others being the *World Social Situation*, *World Population Monitoring* and *The World's Women: Trends and Statistics*). An assessment of this publication was included in a 1997 internal review which analysed the social flagship reports in terms of their objectives, target audiences, value added and areas of overlap and inconsistency. The internal review found that the 1994 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* was well distributed at the Beijing Conference and influenced the resulting Programme for Action, particularly with regard to the need to increase investments in women as a part of poverty alleviation strategies. The review also found that the recurrent publication had become a solid, informative, innovative and forward-looking publication that should be of interest to a wide audience, but that it suffers from an unwarranted low visibility, and that consideration should be given to increasing publicity efforts at the time of publication.

Table 2

Free distribution and sales of Division for the Advancement of Women publications (1995-1999) and The World's Women (1995)

Title of publication and Sales No.	*Print run (all languages)*	*Official list*	*Dept. list*	*Sales (as of Dec. 1999)*
From Beijing to Nairobi (E.95.IV.5)	1 815	–	–	1 581 [1 815]*
Women In a Changing Global Economy: World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, 1994 (E.95.IV.1)	8 955	5 155	1 350	2 189 [2 450]*
World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, 1999 (E.99.IV.8)	5 530	1 230	800	98 [3 500]*
The Work of CEDAW, vol. IV, 1989 (E.96.IV.7)	3 305	2 290	350	180 [665]*
Expert Group Meeting Report on Women and Health, 1998 (E.99.IV.4)	4 490	1 340	2 500	187 [650]*
The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics (E.95.XVII.2)	45 585	8 925	5 160	11 074 [31 500]*

Source: Information provided by Documents Control Section, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and Sales and Marketing Section, Department of Public Information. Numbers include all languages.

* Total number of initial sales stock.

73. The 1999 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, a basic document for the special session of the General Assembly in 2000, focuses on the theme of globalization from a gender perspective. It drew on background papers prepared by other organizational units, specialized agencies and programmes. The publication was launched in October 1999 with a press conference. While it is too early to assess sales patterns, interviews with Division for the Advancement of Women staff members indicate that there is confidence that with support from the Department of Information, and possibly a public relations consultant, the survey could achieve high visibility. This confidence is reflected in the fact that 63 per cent of the print run has been earmarked for sales, compared to 30 per cent for the 1994 edition. The drastic reduction, as indicated in table 2, in official and departmental free distribution is compatible with a strategy of increasing sales, but the 40 per cent reduction in the total print run seems to the Central Evaluation Unit to be inconsistent with the experience with the 1994 edition.

74. Two publications prepared by the Division, *From Beijing to Nairobi* and the 1994 *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, have sold 1,500 copies or more. The relatively high number of sales of these two publications at opportune times suggest the importance of planning the timing of publications to coincide with major events. *The World's Women*, prepared by the Statistics Division, which was also made available at the Beijing Conference, has sold over 11,000 copies since 1995. The Central Evaluation Unit notes that figures for the print run and official distribution of that publication are lower than those given by the same office three years ago and published in the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme (see E/AC.51/1997/2, table 3).

75. Delays in the publication of the work of a recurrent sales publication, *The Work of CEDAW*, and the problems that this creates for professional users are discussed in paragraph 29 above.

76. Recurrent publications such as the "Directory of National Machineries", the "Women 2000" newsletter and "Network", a newsletter produced by the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, are not issued as sales publications. The "Women 2000" newsletter, a recurrent but not a sales publication, is issued twice a year (8,000 copies in English; 2,000 in Spanish, since 1997; and 2,000 in French, since 1998). There have been delays in issuing the two newsletters scheduled for 1999. Each issue is generally devoted to a theme (e.g., the role of women in United Nations peacekeeping, 1995, or women and decision-making, 1997). The newsletter is prepared by an external consultant under the supervision of a staff member of the Division for the Advancement of Women and is not yet available through the Internet. While each issue includes a reader's survey form, the reader response rate is too low to be of analytical significance.

77. As was noted in the in-depth evaluation on the statistics programme (E/AC.51/1997/2), the United Nations does realize modest revenues from sales publications, but it does not analyse income from each publication or the costs of production. It is clear from the print runs and sales figures in table 2 that two of the publications (*The Work of CEDAW*, vol. IV, 1989, and *Expert Group Meeting Report on Women and Health*, 1998) have little or no commercial significance.

78. Information on the actual sales and departmental and official distribution is maintained separately by three organizational units: the Marketing and Sales Section, Department of Public Information; the Document Control Section, Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, and the Office of the Special Adviser. No unit is responsible for putting together the full picture on actual distribution and sales. Without this feedback, management cannot periodically review distribution and sales figures for its publications. In this connection, the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services stated that it can provide to author departments upon request, the information it maintains on print runs, and remaining stocks earmarked for sales and free distribution, and the Department of Public Information agreed on the importance of providing periodic feedback to author departments on sales distribution and is working on providing such a service.

C. Use of professional journals

79. As was mentioned in paragraphs 6, 42 and 45 during the period 1992-1999, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized at least two expert group meetings and workshops annually. The reports resulting from these expert group meetings are posted on the Division for the Advancement of Women web site, and three have been published by the United Nations, ILO and UNFPA. The Division has collected

samples of newsletters of NGOs and other professional groups that contain references to these expert group meeting reports. In interviews with the Central Evaluation Unit, delegations and senior colleagues outside the Division for the Advancement of Women found these reports to be of high quality. Generally, with a few exceptions (two articles based on the work of these expert groups have appeared as chapters in books[10]), there is no concerted effort to convert these reports or other analytical material produced by the Division into articles for publication in professional journals. This would be an effective way to promote the work of the Division for the Advancement of Women among professionals in the fields of women studies and human rights.

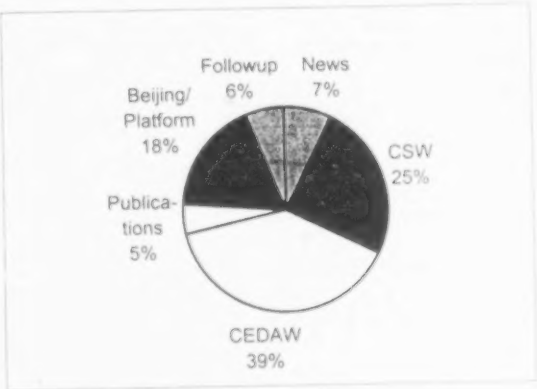
D. Web sites

80. The Division for the Advancement of Women services two separate but related web sites, the Division web site and the WomenWatch web site. The former is managed by the Division, while the latter is a joint project. The Division site shares the same directory as the WomenWatch web site but has its own distinct features and navigation structure.

81. The web site of the Division for the Advancement of Women (www.un.org womenwatch/daw) was created as part of the preparatory process of the Beijing Conference. A project proposal of the Division for the Advancement of Women on WomenWatch: virtual networking to strengthen civil society participation in Beijing+5 and in emerging areas of focus for the twenty-first century stated that during the preparation for and at the Beijing Conference, a total of 158,722 requests were made to the Division for the Advancement of Women web page from 68 countries during less than one month, thereby testifying to the importance of this electronic tool for women to ensure mobilization and information exchange. Currently, the Division's web site provides information on the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly and CEDAW, as well as current news and information on issues relating to the advancement of women. A statistical analysis of the distribution of hits on the Division for the Advancement of Women web site (see table 3 below) shows that during the period from April to July 1999, the highest interest among the users of the Division's web site was in information regarding CEDAW and the Commission on the Status of Women.

82. Launched on International Women's Day, 8 March 1997, WomenWatch is the United Nations Internet gateway to information on women's issues. Under the guidance of the Special Adviser, WomenWatch provides current information on women-specific features of global United Nations conferences, regional and national plans of action for women's advancement, upcoming events of the United Nations system and other organizations, gender statistics and in collaboration with the Focal Point, United Nations vacancies that encourage women to apply. A joint initiative of the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW, the web site provides links to entities within the United Nations system that deal with advancement and empowerment of women. The Britannica Internet Guide (*Britannica.com*) has recently selected WomenWatch as a recommended site. In addition to being a passive information provider, WomenWatch receives about 8 to 10 e-mail inquiries per day through the site. The Division for the Advancement of Women site receives about 10 to 15 inquiries per day. The Division responds to both sets of inquiries. Questions asked to webmasters frequently concern requests for research assistance, information or employment opportunities. Additionally, during a one-year period, 346 telephone, 403 in-person and 46 group mail requests for information were received by the Division for the Advancement of Women alone.

Table 3
Number of hits on the Division for the Advancement of Women web site, April-July 1999, by subject of inquiry



83. WomenWatch is managed by the WomenWatch Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW, and is chaired by the Division. The site is maintained and kept up to date by one full-time staff member of the Division. Another staff member of the Division works part time on WomenWatch, but is primarily responsible for the Division web site. Similarly, one staff at UNIFEM works part time on WomenWatch, but her primary responsibility is UNIFEM's web site. Contributing partners include UNESCO, the World Bank, the sustainable development networking programme, the UNDP gender-in-development programme and the Instituto de la Mujer. As it is an inter-agency project, ideas are also exchanged through the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (see paras. 60-62). National machineries for the advancement of women and various international, national and regional NGOs focusing on women's issues have also made contributions to the site's projects.

84. WomenWatch, one of numerous electronic sites created by United Nations agencies, has among the highest number of hits received by these sites. Table 4 below shows the number of hits per month of selected social activities of relevant United Nations web sites, including, women (*www.un.org/womenwatch*, *www.un.org/womenwatch/daw*); human rights (*www.unhchr.org*); ageing (*www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing*); poverty (*www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty*); disabled (*www.un.org/esa/socdev/disabled*) in the period April to July 1999.

Table 4
Number of hits per month of selected United Nations web sites, April-July 1999

	Women (WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women)	*Human rights (UNHCR)*	*Ageing, poverty and disabled*
April	112 196	53 922	487
May	93 504	41 646	512
June	107 420	42 550	439
July	94 956	40 792	461

85. Recently, WomenWatch hosted a series of on-line conferences on the 12 critical areas of concern as a part of the review and appraisal process. Individuals and organizations were invited to participate in a series of time-limited, moderated on-line discussions focusing mainly on success stories or good practices, obstacles and lessons learned. About 40 per cent of the invitations were sent directly to people and organizations in developing countries, and approximately 10,000 subscribers from 122 countries participated in the on-line dialogues. Moderators were specialists in the various critical areas of concern, and several advisers were consulted in carrying out the project. A report on these discussions will be submitted as a document at the special session of the General Assembly.

86. At panels organized by NGOs around the issue of women and information technologies at the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, WomenWatch has been referred to as a model electronic initiative. In interviews with the Central Evaluation Unit, 15 representatives of NGOs stated that they had used or quoted from the two United Nations web sites in their own work either "sometimes" or "frequently". Special mention was given to the Beijing + 5 section. Many respondents indicated that the sites had shown considerable progress in recent months in posting more information of use and of interest. There were, however, some points that were repeatedly made on areas that needed improvement. Official documents and reports, especially agendas for upcoming meetings and sessions (e.g., Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW) were not available on the site in a timely enough manner to permit NGOs to plan around these events, and navigation to obtain documents on-line was often found to be confusing. Work has been under way to restructure the Division for the Advancement of Women site and to move it to a different directory. Many NGOs proposed links to be put on the site. Since the launching of the site, other sites similar to it have emerged, for example, a parallel NGO site called "WomenAction 2000" to which WomenWatch provided both guidance and financial support.

87. Although efforts have begun to assess the usefulness of the site through analysing the number of hits, the profiles and information of the end-users and their needs still remain largely unknown. Plans to undertake a full evaluation of the web site through outsourcing various tools of appraisal are under way. Currently WomenWatch does have a feedback form on the site, but few users have responded to this. Plans for improvements in the near future include: expansion of the Beijing + 5 section; the redesigning of the Division

for the Advancement of Women site to make navigation easier; more country-specific information; additional links; and the more timely posting of information.

88. The number of hits and the interactive nature of the activity on the WomenWatch web site show that this technological tool is a significant source of information and outreach. In addition to providing valuable information, the site is interactive through the activities around the on-line dialogues. Collaboration and coordination with a broad-based range of actors around these discussions has added an additional, innovative means of outreach.

E. Activities with non-governmental organizations

89. The Platform for Action states, in paragraph 289, that in effectively implementing the Platform for Action NGOs have a "specific role to play in creating a social, economic, political and intellectual climate based on equality between women and men."[2] Subsequently, it was recognized that the facilitation of increased involvement by NGOs would "require considerable expansion of the outreach capacity of the Division, including through publications, increased use of new information technologies, support for dissemination of information through mass media and women's networks, advisory services and database and network linkages" (A/50/744, para. 68).

90. Specific outputs relating to NGOs include briefings for NGOs on sessions of the General Assembly and Commission on the Status of Women and substantive support in the form of background papers and participation in special events. The relationship of NGOs to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has been examined in paragraphs 25 and 26 above. The Division for the Advancement of Women's interaction with NGOs is the responsibility of the Coordination and Outreach Unit, which was established in 1996 to enhance and strengthen linkages on gender issues with the academic and research community, women's organizations, national machinery, networks and development institutions (A/54/223, para. 99). Currently, only one staff member is responsible for all coordination and correspondence with NGOs, including their participation in the Commission on the Status of Women. During the annual NGO registration with the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division relies on the help of interns and volunteers to assist the large number of NGOs. Despite these efforts, representatives of NGOs stated that the lack of assistance was a severe problem.

91. The numbers of NGOs involved in sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women has been increasing, and according to a Division staff member, it is anticipated that for the upcoming special session of the General Assembly, more than 400 NGOs, not including those that are accredited with the Economic and Social Council, will be represented. As part of their role as the secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women facilitates NGO participation in sessions of the Commission. NGOs hold parallel side events alongside meetings of the Commission and contribute to activities of the Commission. At the forty-third session of the Commission, the Division registered 319 NGOs represented by 812 persons, facilitated more than 50 NGO side events and held daily briefings and caucus meetings. A special briefing was provided by the Deputy Director, and one hour during the general debate was set aside for NGOs to make statements. Spokespersons representing NGO caucuses on relevant issues also spoke during the dialogues on the critical areas of concern. For the last three years, the Division has also sponsored a small group of women from NGOs in developing countries to participate in sessions of the Commission. The selection process of this group occurs in consultation with several NGOs. In addition, the Division for the Advancement of Women exchanges information with NGOs through the quarterly newsletter "Women 2000", the WomenWatch web site and on-line dialogues on the 12 critical areas of concern. Information on the activities of NGOs and other institutions of civil society in implementing the Platform for Action is regularly included in reports submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women and the General Assembly (see E/CN.6/1999/2, paras. 43-52, and A/54/264, paras. 50-57, respectively). Briefings for NGOs are held before sessions of the Commission, and meetings are convened between NGOs and the Division for the Advancement of Women as needed. The Division also currently maintains a database of NGOs. Additionally, the Special Adviser, Director and other staff members frequently participate as speakers at NGO events throughout the year.

92. As mentioned in paragraph 86 above, CEU conducted a survey among NGOs identified by the Division for the Advancement of Women as close collaborators. Several NGOs stated that the Division's relations with NGOs have shown significant improvement in recent years and that this healthy trend seems to be continuing. Many NGOs stated that they would like to be more involved and at an earlier stage in the preparatory process. Several saw the need for more than one access point for NGOs. NGOs also indicated their desire for more briefings on CEDAW and other facets of the United Nations system. Almost all NGOs that were interviewed were concerned with the issue of establishing clear modalities regarding both participation in the Commission on the Status of Women and collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women. Many expressed the need to set clear, defined and agreed upon modalities for NGO participation, particularly on the selection of NGOs addressing the Commission during the general debate. Despite the Division's regular contact with NGOs, many NGO representatives expressed the sentiment that the Division's collaboration with NGOs was selective and based more on personal contacts than on formal modalities.

93. A number of recommendations have been made on the issue of coordination and outreach to NGOs. In 1996, the Economic and Social Council, recommended in its decision 1996/297, that the General Assembly examine the question of the participation of NGOs in all areas of the work of the United Nations in the light of the experience gained through arrangements for consultations between NGOs and the Economic and Social Council. In the mid-term review of the medium-term plan, 1996-2001, one of the recommendations was to develop principles and guidelines for strengthening cooperation with NGOs active on gender issues, both in advocacy and project implementation (E/CN.6/1998/3, para. 52 (m)). In addition, the Joint Inspection Unit recommended that "the executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system should take concrete steps to make their ... gender programmes more effective, *inter alia*, ... through the increased emphasis on outreach and interaction with women's and other non-governmental organizations" (see A/54/223, para. 44), and in relation to actions to be taken by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, that "the comparatively feeble resources of the Division for the Advancement of Women should be increased and concentrated much more on information outreach, system-wide programming and follow-up, and interaction with non-governmental organizations" (ibid., para. 94).

VIII. Gender advisory services

94. In the 1998 restructuring of the Secretariat and establishment of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, four additional Professional posts were redeployed to the Division for the Advancement of Women to support gender analysis and advisory services to Governments on gender issues. As was mentioned in paragraph 7 above, an interregional adviser was assigned to the Gender Advisory Services Unit in 1999.

95. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 states that one of the shifts of the subprogramme on the advancement of women would be to integrate more fully gender policy advisory services into its overall work programme (see A/54/6 (Sect. 9) and Corr.1, para. 9.68). Evaluation is also a responsibility of the Unit.

96. The Unit, in collaboration with the Division's Women's Rights Unit, organized a subregional training workshop on support in the preparation of State parties' reports to be submitted to CEDAW, which was held at Cotonou, Benin, on 8 and 9 July 1999. The workshop targeted French-speaking countries in Africa that had ratified the Convention but not yet submitted an initial report. The objectives were to provide Governments with guidelines on how to prepare initial or periodic reports to be submitted to the Committee under article 18 of the Convention. The workshop also provided an opportunity for participating countries to share and exchange their views and experiences on obstacles and challenges in reporting as well as successful strategies to overcome obstacles. A follow-up in-country training was conducted for the government officials of Benin from 19 to 28 July 1999. UNDP provided the collaboration and logistical support for the workshop and in-country training. The Unit is planning to organize similar training workshops for the remaining countries that have ratified the Convention but not yet submitted an initial report. A new version of the CEDAW training manual mentioned in paragraph 25 above has been updated by the Division for the Advancement of Women for use by the Unit in its training of Governments. The interregional

adviser also provides technical support to Governments at their request.

97. In collaboration with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and other units within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Unit is implementing a UNDP-funded project on the assessment of gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women in sub-Saharan Africa, which aims at reviewing the extent to which gender perspectives are integrated in the operational activities at the national level in 22 countries. A technical review committee convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Unit, gathering technical experts and representatives from various United Nations agencies, will assess the outcome and recommendations of the study.

98. The relatively new function of providing gender advisory services can potentially play a major role in enhancing the overall effectiveness of the subprogramme. Some of the projects undertaken by the Unit, such as provision of training, lend themselves to follow-up evaluation 6 or 12 months later; the Division for the Advancement of Women has not yet taken that initiative.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

99. The Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women have contributed significantly to the impact referred to in paragraph 3 above. In this regard, activities facilitating the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and an imaginative and productive use of the Internet deserve special mention. The programme's resources are stretched over many activities which support effective work, and in which there is an interest by civil society larger than that for any other programme in the economic and social sectors.

100. The in-depth evaluation resulted in a number of observations, set out in the paragraphs cited below, on support of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, coordination, print publications, the WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites, and collaboration with NGOs. In this connection, the Office of Internal Oversight Services makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1
Support to enhance the effectiveness of the reporting mechanism of CEDAW

(a) *Backlog*. The secretariat of the Committee should further study ways to reduce the backlog and propose to the Committee targets and methods to achieve this objective. (See paras. 24 and 38 above.)

(b) *Overdue reports*. The secretariat should propose to the Committee a plan to reduce the number of overdue reports by considering the adoption of procedures that have been used by other treaty bodies, such as sending periodic reminders to States parties and encouraging those States parties that have never submitted an initial report (54 as of December 1999) to request technical assistance. (See paras. 24 and 38 above.)

(c) Given the emphasis placed by the Committee on openness to NGOs, the secretariat should ensure that concerned NGOs are informed of a State party's presentation of its report sufficiently in advance to allow them to participate in the meetings, that they are provided with the relevant guidelines and that they are encouraged to translate their reports into the working languages of the United Nations. (See paras. 25-26 above.)

Recommendation 2
Enhance efforts to promote the work of CEDAW

The Division for the Advancement of Women should indicate on its web site that the summary records of CEDAW are available in hard copy and how interested parties can obtain them, and publication of *The Work of CEDAW* should be terminated. (See paras. 29-30 above.)

Recommendation 3
A new Secretary-General's bulletin

In order to encourage the implementation of the newly revised special measures, ST/SGB/282 of 5 January 1996 should be revised to reflect the stronger measures endorsed by the General Assembly. (See para. 58 above.)

Recommendation 4
Improving coordination within the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (See paras. 60-62 above.)

(a) In order to ensure regular contact, the Division for the Advancement of Women should propose to the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality the creation of an electronic information network among members of the IACWGE for monthly e-mail briefings on substantive issues discussed at Headquarters and New York-based agencies and follow-up to task force discussions. This would facilitate more regular sharing of information.

(b) The Division for the Advancement of Women should propose to the IACWGE extending the duration of IACWGE meetings by one or two days or have a one- or two-day "preparatory" to IACWGE with specific items for in-depth discussion.

Recommendation 5
Greater coordination between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities (See paras. 64-67 above.)

(a) Regular discussions of strategies and annual work plans should take place at the senior level between the Division for the Advancement of Women and other United Nations programmes and entities, taking into consideration their comparative advantage.

(b) United Nations entities providing gender advisory services, such as the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNDP, UNIFEM and the regional commissions, should exchange work plans and take other measures to ensure that activities in this area are well coordinated and reflect comparative advantage.

Recommendation 6
Marketing and distribution of the Division for the Advancement of Women publications

In close collaboration with other relevant departments, the Division for the Advancement of Women should identify potential target audiences and develop different marketing and distribution approaches for various types of publications, based on the commercial potential of the publication (see paras. 71-78 above):

(a) With respect to publications that are issued as sales publications as a matter of record or for other non-commercial reasons, print runs should be small; the information contained in these publications should be posted on the WomenWatch web site. (See para. 77 above.)

(b) Publications that are of potential commercial significance should be financed, produced, advertised and sold so as to maximize sales revenues, with on-line information made available in a manner that protects the United Nations commercial interest in those publications. For these, advertising, book launches and other publicity events should be organized. (See para. 74 above.)

(c) Not-for-sale publications should be issued in an inexpensive print form and included on the WomenWatch web site. (See para. 76 above.)

Recommendation 7
Marketing data

The Marketing and Sales Section, Department of Public Information, should provide periodic feedback to author departments on sales. (See paras. 77-78 above.)

Recommendation 8
Use of professional journals

The staff of the Division for the Advancement of Women should encourage publication of articles in professional journals on the work of the programme on the advancement of women. (See para. 79 above.)

Recommendation 9
WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites

The WomenWatch and the Division for the Advancement of Women web sites should be improved in the following ways (see paras. 80-88 above):

(a) The end-user's profiles and needs should be determined so that they can be better met through the information and design of the web site (see para. 87 above);

(b) In posting available documents on the site, priority should be given to time-sensitive material such as agendas for upcoming meetings (see paras. 86-87 above);

(c) The feasibility of extending on-line dialogues to include preparatory processes of Commission on the Status of Women sessions to allow more in-depth participation in these events should be explored. (See paras. 85, 88-89 above.)

Recommendation 10
Enhanced collaboration with non-governmental organizations

In the light of the high level of interest of NGOs and the importance placed on their support and involvement, the following measures should be taken to enable the Division for the Advancement of Women to facilitate adequately their participation in relevant United Nations activities. (See paras. 89-93 above.)

(a) Increase the means and frequency of communication between the Division for the Advancement of Women and NGOs, including more briefings on relevant issues and more open dialogue through various means (e.g., meetings, on-line discussions). (See paras. 92-93 above.)

(b) Establish clear, defined and agreed-upon modalities for the selection of NGOs to address the Commission on the Status of Women and for NGO collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women. (See para. 92 above.)

(*Signed*) Hans **Corell**
Under-Secretary-General
Overseer, Office of Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/52/16), para. 306.

[2] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] Ibid., annex II, chap. III.

[4] Ibid., resolution 1, annex I.

[5] Ibid., annex II, chap. V, para. 287.

[6] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/54/38/Rev.1), part one, chap. V.

[7] CEDAW/C/IND/1, introduction.

[8] Ibid., *Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3/Rev.1), chap. IV, sect. A.

[9] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.97.XVII.10.

[10] See D. Gierycz, "Women in Decision Making: Can we change the status quo?" in: I. Breines, D. Gierycz and B. Reardon, *Towards a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace* (Paris, UNESCO, 1999).